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ABSTRACT

The evaluation of urban foreign language programs by the teacher, supervisor, and school district, county, or other agency is discussed. Evaluation of the program by the teacher is largely a self-evaluation process to reexamine the course objectives and student achievement based on specific criteria. Criteria may include teacher-produced tests, standard language proficiency tests, and student questionnaire responses. The supervisor's evaluation may be based on observation of instruction, as well as periodic self-evaluation (i.e., whether sufficient guidelines and materials were provided to the teachers). The school district or county education office may form an audit team with several professional members in the field of foreign language teaching. Areas to be covered by the audit team would include policy, regulations, directives, scheduling, cost-effectiveness, student attrition, and teacher-student ratio. The quality of textbooks, instructional aids, standard tests, and classroom instruction would also be investigated. All evaluators may employ the following methods and instruments: opinion surveys, interviews, direct observations, review of records, discussion and analysis, and summarization/findings/recommendations. (SW)

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Evaluation of Foreign Language Program in Urban Community

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Introduction. Foreign language program evaluation will be done slightly differently depending on who the evaluator is, e.g., the classroom teacher, school principle, or school district. A foreign language program evaluation may be conducted by an individual or group of people. Thus methods used by each administrative stage of instruction may alter somewhat. Let's look at the evaluation of a foreign language program from several different educational stages.

1. Evaluation by the teacher, Self-Evaluation.

This is largely a self-evaluation process.

It's the first step of evaluation.

This is to be done periodically by the foreign language teacher after each school term.

a. Re-examination of course objectives established in the beginning of the course.

b. Evaluate the products of the course, namely the achievements of the students based on the criteria. Criteria provided by:

(1) Federal Agencies.

(2) School district or state Education Department.

(3) Institutions of higher learning.

(4) Individual School.

(5) Foreign Language Teacher.

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c. Such criteria are:

(1) Teacher made test, Interim and Final Tests.

(2) (a) Standard lanquage proficiency tests developed by school district or at the state level, recognized private testing service institutions, or Federal institution of foreign language learning.

(b) These standard Language Proficiency Tests may be some form of Criterion Referenced Tests (CRTs). These CRTs must establish a minimum standard the students must master. And these CRTs should test 4 language skills. Independent separate tests for each skill, e.g.,

Listening Comprehension Test

Speaking Test

Reading Test

Writing Test

Another way to test proficiency is to measure language skills based on language proficiency level description which ranges from 0-5. In the last year or so much progress has been made in this area for uniform standardization of language proficicency levels. Many Federal and private organizations have participated in this project. ACTFL, DLI, FSI, CIA, and private universities have joined in this endeavor. The first such national meeting was held at DLI in Nov. 1981.

(c) Develop test reliability and validity indices. This kind of standard CRTs may be developed by larger educational units under the cooperation of foreign language teachers and psychomatricians. One example I can give you is

a standard language proficiency test designed for the secondary school students in California called "Common Concepts Foreign Language Tests", published by California Test Bureau in Monterey, California. These tests are for 4 languages, i.e., German, French, Spanish, and English.

d. The design of these measurement criteria, e.g. proficicency tests and CRTs are to be based on the foreign language learning objectives. If there is no standard foreign language proficiency tests or CRTs provided by the larger educational units, then the instructor may design such tests based on the teacher developed course/learning objectives.

e. A useful reference: FSI language proficiency descriptions on speaking classified into 5 different levels. Such proficiency levels may apply to anyone including high/middle school students.

f. Give students' questionnaire after the course which may tap their opinion about the instruction. This to be strictly for the teachers own use and need not be revealed to anyone. Some very valuable hints could be obtained from this.

g. Go back to full cycle of instruction and evaluate whole segments of instruction.

(1) Course objectives

(2) Course and test materials

(3) Instructional methods, especially student interaction and games etc. to keep students motivation and interest at high level.

(4) Schedules and activities

(5) Learning environment and facilities, e.g. classroom, lab, library, AV materials, etc.

(6) Achievement levels of students at the end of the course.

(7) Conduct analysis of data and findings. Find strength and weakness of the instructional program. Locate problem areas which need improvement.

(8) Develop systematic methods for problem solving.

(9) Implement measures necessary for updating and improving the course.

2. Supervisors Evaluation.

Supervisor's evaluation should have same sequence as the instructor. Supervisor and instructor should work together. There is one factor we may add here. That is the observation of instruction in progress for unbiased evaluation of teaching by the supervisor. This may be done as discreetly as possible with minimum distraction to the classroom activities.

Supervisors self-evaluation will be centered around to see whether sufficient guidance and materials were provided to the classroom instructors, e.g., policy guide, course objectives, standard foreign language proficiency test or CRTs, or up-to-date AV materials to include cultural films and movies.

3. Program Evaluation by Federal Agency, School District, County, Accreditation Committees, and other agencies.

A larger outside agency may form an audit team with several professional members in the field of foreign language teaching to include expert instruction, curriculum, testing, and evaluation.

These audit teams may go into the foreign language classrooms on random basis for an accurate assessment of the foreign language programs within its jurisdiction. Areas to be covered by the audit team for evaluation on foreign language instructional programs would most likely be:

a. Policy, regulations, directives, and scheduling.

b. Cost-effectiveness viewed from several points such as attrition rate (particularly in the urban area schools), teacher/student ratio, teacher's classroom contact hours, teacher work load etc. Attrition rate is particularly important here.

c. Quality of textbooks and instructional aid materials.

d. Quality of standard tests such as proficiency and CRTs on students' attainment of classroom instruction.

e. Quality and timeliness of facilities such as labs, libraries, AV materials (films, projectors).

f. Foreign language teaching and social environment such as involvment of students in the foreign language speaking community---instruction in a living situation. Findings on all of these will culminate into the overall recommendations by the audit team. The school districts, county, and state department of education should provide assistance to schools on course development and standard test system development. If the school district does not have enough resources, it should seek assistance from state and Federal government Lately, quite large sums of aid are available from these sources. The Monterey Peninsula School District in California where I

serve as Foreign Language/Bilingual Consultant, for example received $250,000 from Federal Government during school year 1978 - 1980 for the bilingual and foreign language instruction of 7th to 9th grade students.

4. The Evaluation Methods.

The foreign language classroom teachers, school administrators, or district or county board may employ several or all of the following methods and evaluation instruments.

a. Opinion Surveys. Design a questionnaire to elicit universal, quantifiable information from as many students, managers, and faculty as possible. "Universal" questionnaire returns are always better than small sampling methods. If the numbers is large, use a computerized system.

b. Interviews. A "person to person" interview (group or individual) is conducted in an informal way to get in-depth information. A randomized sampling method is the best to get balanced unbiased inputs.

c. Direct Observations. Observations of class sessions in operation and other activities may be used to see whether instructions are properly carried out. Teaching method, level of students' involvement, and interaction in the class are observed also.

d. Review of Records and Documents. The evaluator or evaluation team closely examines all relevant course materials, tests, grades, etc. Examination of test results, particularly of CRTs and proficiency tests, is important, because these data can provide some necessary information regarding the

students' achievement and language proficiency levels, as well as the effectiveness of the language instructional program.

e. Discussion and Analysis. Findings are discussed among evaluation team members and other involved personnel under the leadership of the project coordinator. Sort out vital elements among the findings and organize them into a meaningful sequence.

f. Summarization, Findings, and Recommendations in a Report Format. Data, analyses and summarizations are organized into a systematic format. Recommendations are derived from the findings. All these vital informations are written into a compact, comprehensive and understandable report.

5. Conclusion.

a. Teachers of foreign language schools should actively conduct periodic self-evaluation for updating and improving the course they teach. Not only that, they should also actively seek involvement and assistance of larger educational units. Bring them for evaluation of foreign language courses within your school system. Let them get involved in evaluation of existing programs. Have them find out what is needed to improve your foreign language instructional programs. There is a saying that "a crying baby gets the milk first". Evaluation is an integral part of instructional system and also it is a good way to get attention. Getting attention is especially important to any foreign language instructional system with scarce resources.

b. Utilize available existing resources for foreign language teaching near your area related to international culture

and community, e.g., Spanish speaking, Asian, or European communitites. Urban/central city areas are rich in such communities (not found in rural areas) and will provide rich learning ground for the student who is learning foreign languages. The teachers and other evaluators should set up some evaluation system to ensure that the students make sufficient contact and interaction to learn foreign language thus this will keep students interested in learning process. This will reduce disinterest associated with drop-out problems so common in foreign language learning process. Some governments in the world have adopted this learning process and vigorously implement it. Several U.S. Government foreign language schools have created "language houses" where students live there 24 hours a day in true cultural mode of the country of the foreign language they are learning. Students live in the "language houses" many days where English speaking is not permitted. "Neighbors" from the foreign language speaking community are invited to the "language houses" as an intergral part of instruction. Evaluation of student's performance for the course will be determined by his/her behavior in cultural mode as well as language ability.

When American tourists visited the People's Republic of China in recent years, they found that official guides for American tourist groups were Chinese college students who were majoring in English. They would stay with Americans 24 hours a day for as long as 30 days earning college credits for such activities. Students repeat this process for several times. PRC students were learning from Americans not only English but also history, geography, people, culture of America and much more. This is

a good example of learning foreign language in true life setting. These are a few examples of community interaction in foreign language learning. With imagination and creativeness, urban communities in America can utilize international community resources for promoting foreign language learning.